

**IN THE CLAIMS**

1. (currently amended) A fender assembly adapted for attachment to a fixed support surface of a dock structure at a predetermined height above the ground, said fender assembly comprising:

a vertical guide track which, in use, is fixed with respect to the support surface,

a vertically disposed elongate fender guided for slidable vertical movement along said guide track by a longitudinally extending keeper portion co-operable with the guide track, and

spring loaded fender restraining means co-acting with and adapted to resist movement of the fender when displaced downwards from a normal at rest position by an externally applied force, said fender restraining means being movable between a retracted position wherein the fender is supported in its said normal at rest position and an extended position wherein the fender is displaced downwards from said at rest position.

2. (currently amended) A fender assembly according to claim 1 wherein said fender restraining means includes a transverse abutment against which ~~the~~ an underside of the fender engages when the fender is in its normal at rest position, and whereby any downwards movement of the fender causes simultaneous downward movement of the abutment from its retracted position.

3. (currently amended) A fender assembly according to claim 1 wherein the fender is a solid rubber or rubber-like block ~~having~~ and wherein the keeper portion comprises a slotted keyway extending centrally along its rear face, said guide track slidably engaging within said keyway.

4. (currently amended) A fender assembly according to claim 3 wherein said keyway extends between ~~the~~ top and bottom faces of the fender and said guide track has a length which approximates the length of the keyway, and wherein said abutment is located adjacent ~~the~~ a lower end of the track when the fender restraining means is in its retracted position.

5. (currently amended) A loading dock fender assembly comprising:  
a mounting securable to a support surface of a loading dock,  
a fender guide track secured to and extending longitudinally of ~~the~~ a front face of the mounting,

a vertically disposed slidable elongate fender or bumper having front and rear faces, guided for slidable vertical movement along said guide track by a longitudinally extending keeper portion co-operable with the guide track from a normal at rest position on the track in either an upwards or downwards direction,

a fender restraining member movable between a retracted position in which the fender is supported in its said normal at rest position and an extended position spaced vertically downwards from said retracted position, and

bias means operably associated with said fender restraining member for biasing the latter in the direction of its retracted position,

arranged so that, in use, when an external downwards force is applied to the fender, the fender will slide downwardly along said track from its normal at rest position against the resistance of the bias means.

6. (original) A fender assembly according to claim 5 wherein the fender and the guide track are approximately co-extensive.

7. (previously presented) A fender assembly according to claim 5 wherein said fender restraining member comprises a vertically slidable U-shaped rod which has a pair of upstanding legs extending along opposite sides of the fender, and a transversely extending bridging portion interconnecting the legs, said bridging portion having a forwardly projecting abutment secured thereto and abutting the underside of the fender whereby any downwards movement of the fender causes simultaneously downward movement of the U-shaped rod, and wherein said bias means includes a pair of compressible coil springs each supported on a respective said upstanding leg and extending along its length.

8. (currently amended) A fender assembly according to claim 5 wherein said fender is a solid rubber or rubber-like block ~~having~~ and wherein the keeper portion comprises a T-shaped keyway formed in its rear face centrally thereof, said guide track slidably locating within said keyway.

9. (currently amended) A fender assembly according to claim 7 wherein said mounting comprises an elongate planar or channel section mounting plate which is fixable to the dock support surface by means of welding.

10. (currently amended) A fender assembly according to claim 9 wherein said U-shaped rod is guided for vertical sliding movement by means of a pair of tubular sleeves fixed on opposite sides of the mounting plate adjacent the bottom corners thereof, each said upstanding leg passing through a respective said sleeve, with each of the coil springs having its lower end abutting against the upper end of its associated said sleeve.

11. (original) A fender assembly according to claim 10 wherein the upper end of each said upstanding leg is threaded and threadably receives a retention nut against which the upper end of a respective said spring abuts.

12. (original) A fender assembly according to claim 5 wherein the fender and the guide track are arranged so that the fender will slide upwards along the track from its said normal at rest position under the influence of an external upwards force applied to the fender and then return to its said at rest position under its own weight, when the force is removed.

13. (original) A fender assembly according to claim 7 wherein the bridging portion of the U-shaped rod, when the U-shaped rod is in its retracted position, lies adjacent the lower end of said guide track.

14. canceled

15. canceled

16. (currently amended) A fender assembly according to claim 2 1 wherein the fender is a solid rubber or rubber-like block ~~having~~ and wherein the keeper portion comprises a slotted keyway extending centrally along its rear face, said guide track slidably engaging within said keyway.

17. (previously presented) A fender assembly according to claim 16 wherein said keyway extends between the top and bottom faces of the fender and said guide track has a length which approximates the length of the keyway, and wherein said abutment is located adjacent the lower end of the track when the fender restraining means is in its retracted position.

18. (previously presented) A fender assembly according to claim 6 wherein said fender restraining member comprises a vertically slidable U-shaped rod which has a pair of upstanding legs extending along opposite sides of the fender, and a transversely extending bridging portion interconnecting the legs, said bridging portion having a forwardly projecting abutment secured thereto and abutting the underside of the fender whereby any downwards movement of the fender causes simultaneously downward movement of the U-shaped rod, and wherein said bias means includes a pair of compressible coil springs each supported on a respective said upstanding leg and extending along its length.

19. (currently amended) A fender assembly according to claim 6 wherein said fender is a solid rubber or rubber-like block ~~having~~ and wherein the keeper portion comprises a T-shaped keyway formed in its rear face centrally thereof, said guide track slidably locating within said keyway.

20. (currently amended) A fender assembly according to claim 7 wherein said fender is a solid rubber or rubber-like block ~~having~~ and wherein the keeper portion comprises a T-shaped keyway formed in its rear face centrally thereof, said guide track slidably locating within said keyway.

21. (currently amended) A fender assembly according to claim 18 wherein said fender is a solid rubber or rubber-like block ~~having~~ and wherein the keeper portion comprises a T-shaped keyway formed in its rear face centrally thereof, said guide track slidably locating within said keyway.

22. (previously presented) A fender assembly according to claim 18 wherein the bridging portion of the U-shaped rod, when the U-shaped rod is in its retracted position, lies adjacent the lower end of said guide track.

23. (new) A fender assembly adapted for attachment to a fixed support surface of a dock structure at a predetermined height above the ground, said fender assembly comprising: a pair of laterally spaced apart parallel fender sub-assemblies, each sub-assembly comprising:  
a vertical guide track which, in use, is fixed with respect to the support surface,  
a vertically disposed elongate fender guided for slidable movement along said guide track by a longitudinally extending keeper portion co-operable with the guide track, and

spring loaded fender restraining means co-acting with and adapted to resist movement of the fender when displaced downwards from a normal at rest position by an externally applied force, said fender restraining means being movable between a retracted position wherein the fender is supported in its said normal at rest position and an extended position wherein the fender is displaced downwards from said at rest position,

wherein each fender sub-assembly is operable independent of the other of the pair.

24. (new) A fender assembly according to claim 1 wherein the fender restraining means of each sub-assembly includes a transverse abutment against which an underside of the fender engages when the fender is in its normal at rest position, and whereby any downwards movement of the fender causes simultaneous downward movement of the abutment from its retracted position.

25. (new) A fender assembly according to claim 24 wherein the fender of each sub-assembly is a solid rubber or rubber-like block and wherein the keeper portion comprises a slotted keyway extending centrally along its rear face, said guide track slidably engaging within said keyway.

26. (new) A fender assembly according to claim 25 wherein the keyway of each sub-assembly extends between top and bottom faces of the fender and said guide track has a length which approximates the length of the keyway, and wherein said abutment is located adjacent a lower end of the track when the fender restraining means is in its retracted position.